

their forever home. Those are the stories of kids who deserve these families and families who deserve kids.

As a Christian, I believe life begins at conception, but too often, when discussing pro-life issues, we often refer to that life as the child's time in the womb. We should, however, be focusing on the life of a child after they are born, and that philosophy should apply to children all around the world.

Many other countries don't place the same value on life as we do here in the United States. In some countries, parents may choose to abort babies who might have disabilities, and if a child is born with a disability, they are put up for adoption at much higher rates.

China is one of these countries. Right now, there are several hundred American families who have been matched with or have begun the process of adoption with children in China, but the pandemic has indefinitely halted most of the adoptions from China moving forward.

Back in May, I sent a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken asking for the State Department to have diplomatic discussions with China so these kids could go home to their new families, but here we are in November, and I have yet to receive a response from the State Department.

Over 400 children are still stuck in China, with their families unable to bring them home. Most of these children have some type of medical or special need and are currently living in Chinese orphanages.

One such child is Cherry. She is stuck in China while her forever family is waiting with open arms here in the United States. Cherry has Down syndrome and needs medical attention, which is currently being delayed.

When speaking about Cherry, her forever family said:

The sooner we can get little Cherry into our home, the sooner we can give her all the attention, therapy, and love to bring out her fullest potential in life.

Cora Lee has lived in an orphanage for 3½ years, ever since she was an infant. Cora Lee has a medical condition that needs to be treated or could eventually lead to blindness. Here in the United States, there are parents, siblings, aunts and uncles, and a church family who are waiting for her to come home so they can help provide help in the future.

Then there is Charlie, who recently had a fourth birthday. He has a family in Alabama who cannot wait to welcome him home. The first several years of Charlie's life have been tough. He needs specialized care that only a loving family can provide.

Given that the Biden administration just reopened our borders to so many international travelers and that one of our COVID vaccines for children age 5 through 11 has just been authorized, I believe it is past time for us to get these children home to the families who have been waiting years to love them and care for them.

Adoption is the gift that keeps on giving by providing children the opportunity to rise above difficult circumstances. We need to work together towards policies that make this gift more attainable for all who can provide a stable home. After all, family is the heartbeat of the American dream.

Madam President, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. REED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

PROTECTING AMERICA'S FIRST RESPONDERS ACT OF 2021

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, the Senate has unanimously passed a bill entitled Protecting America's First Responders Act. I authored this legislation to expand benefits to first responders who are injured in the line of duty.

The Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program, or PSOB for short, offers a one-time lump sum payment to first responders who are killed or permanently disabled in the line of duty. I think that legislation has been on the books since the 1970s.

I started investigating this program when I heard complaints about long delays in processing payments. Those delays reached up to 3 years, on average. It is just not understandable why it should take 3 years for somebody who is killed in the line of duty to decide if the family should have help from that program. We fixed that particular issue with my 2017 bill entitled the Public Safety Officers' Benefit Improvement Act.

However, my investigation uncovered a lot of other problems with that program, now 50 years old. The Justice Department was denying payments to folks who should have received those payments. In one case, a disabled police officer suffered a traumatic brain injury. The Department said that he wasn't disabled because he held a part-time position at Home Depot as a greeter.

In another case, again, a police officer with brain injury was denied the benefit. Why? Because the officer tinkered around with motorcycles in his garage. It would take this officer months to do simple things that would otherwise have taken him just days. Still, the Department said that he wasn't disabled. They said it. It is unreasonable.

But my bill that I described to you, which has now passed the Senate recently, will correct this problem. This legislation clarifies that first responders who are totally and permanently disabled but can still perform some very simple tasks can still get benefits. It adds a fair boost in payments to first responders who have waited years for

these benefits. It provides the Justice Department with more tools so that it can process claims more quickly.

Finally, my bill extends a presumption in the law that ensures that first responders who contract COVID on duty don't have to jump through hoops to prove it, because, you know, with COVID—did you get it when you were actually policing, or did you get it when you were in a restaurant, or did you get it when you were in church?—you don't really know. This bill will go a long ways in helping our first responders where it is impossible to show whether you got it when you were actually on duty.

I would like to thank Senators GILLIBRAND and BOOKER, as well as all the other cosponsors.

I also want to thank our House counterparts, specifically, Congressman PASCRELL and his staff, who led the effort to pass the bill in the House of Representatives.

Lastly, I want to thank the Justice Department for working closely with us to improve this language.

Before I wrap up, I just want to say a few words about our first responders. Whether it is police officers, firefighters, or EMTs, first responders are the embodiment of the best qualities of Americans. Their daily sacrifices make our society better and safer.

I am proud to have sponsored this legislation, and I urge the President to quickly sign the bill.

HUNTER BIDEN

Now, Mr. President, on another shorter issue, I want to bring up something that deals with something I deal with a lot, what we call oversight, to make sure that we have transparency to our government, because transparency brings accountability, and this is something we are having a hard time getting answers on.

On July 30 of this year, Senator JOHNSON of Wisconsin and I sent a letter to the White House Counsel. That letter was based on media reports—yes, media reports—that then-Vice President Biden used private emails for government business. If that happened, that is wrong, and we ought to know about it.

As part of that use, he sent government information to his son Hunter Biden. The news reports provided details about then-Vice President Biden's email addresses at that time and the fake names that he used for that email.

As one example from the reported emails, in 2016, an employee of the Office of the Vice President emailed Biden his schedule and copied Hunter Biden. In another email in 2016, the same employee reportedly emailed Vice President Biden about an early morning preparation for a 9 a.m. phone call with the Ukrainian President. Hunter Biden was again reportedly copied on that email.

As we all know, Hunter Biden served on the board of a corrupt Ukrainian energy company at the time of these emails. Certainly, Hunter Biden would

have been quite interested in any and all information relating to the U.S. Government's communication with the Ukrainian Government.

Now, if these reports are accurate, it is unclear whether Vice President Biden forwarded related emails to a government account to satisfy Federal recordkeeping requirements. It kind of sounds familiar, doesn't it? Just remember, the same issues came up with Hillary Clinton.

Given Vice President Biden's apparent pattern and practice with government emails, Senator JOHNSON and I would like to know if this pattern and practice has continued as President of the United States. That is why, on July 30, as I indicated, Senator JOHNSON and I asked exactly that question.

First, we asked, according to the letter: "What steps did then-Vice President Biden take to ensure that all his government emails and related communications were properly stored and archived?" In other words, did they follow the law?

Second, we asked: "Does President Biden use nongovernment email to communicate government business or email his family members government information? If so, what steps have been taken to ensure that those communications satisfy federal recordkeeping and archival requirements?"

Now, these sound like pretty simple questions that President Biden can answer quickly. Moreover, it would be quite easy for the President to deny reports if these reports were not accurate. Our letter provided President Biden that opportunity.

To date, we haven't received a response. In fact, as you can tell from July 30, it has been nearly 3 months.

The fact that the White House Counsel's Office and President Biden can't find time to answer these threshold questions draws suspicion. One would think that the White House would gladly answer that the President isn't using government email to communicate government business with family members.

Now, wouldn't one think that the White House would very gladly say that it is properly archiving email records?

This is a matter of transparency, and it is a matter of transparency where the public deserves answers.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Texas.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I am sure I am not alone in expressing concern for what the next few weeks in the runup to Christmas are going to look like, and certainly the Senate and the Congress have not operated as a well-oiled machine, to be sure.

Back in September, when the Senate should have passed a group of bills to fund the government for the next year, we saw the can get kicked down the road.

Last month, when our Democratic colleagues, the majority, had ample

time and a clear roadmap to raise the debt ceiling, they punted and really depended on 11 of us on this side of the aisle to avoid a threat to the full faith and credit of the United States.

Despite a strong push from both the distinguished Presiding Officer, the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and the ranking member, the majority leader has so far refused to bring up the National Defense Authorization Act even though it has been ready for months. I am hoping that will change this week. I am advised that it will change and it will be taken up.

These are not necessarily lofty goals we are talking about. We are talking about the bare minimum when it comes to doing the work of the Nation: funding the government, paying our bills, strengthening our military. But none of these basic responsibilities have been accomplished yet.

These delays weren't out of necessity. After all, the Senate hasn't been debating and voting on important legislation—just a series of nominations and dead-on-arrival messaging bills.

With such a long yearend-to-do list, our colleagues on the other side of the aisle, who control the agenda, don't have a lot of time. The Senate is only scheduled to be in session for 2 weeks before government funding expires, and there is just another additional week of scheduled legislating before the end of the year. You would think that would mean it is time to buckle up and start checking off these high-priority items, but our Democratic colleagues believe they have an even more important job. Forget the millions of government employees who would be left without a paycheck before the holidays or the economic crisis that would cripple our country if we defaulted on our debts or the servicemembers and their families who deserve a pay raise; our Democratic colleagues, the majority, are devoting all their time and agenda to a spending spree and the largest tax increase in American history, which apparently is the top item on the House agenda this week.

The size and scope of this bill has changed a lot over the last several months. The chairman of the Budget Committee, the Senator from Vermont, initially floated a \$6 trillion spending spree and tax increase. It was later ostensibly pared back to \$3.5 trillion, and now our colleagues claim it would cost a mere \$1.75 trillion—hardly a bargain and certainly hardly for sure when it comes to the amount of spending and taxing because, until the bill is finalized and the Congressional Budget Office has time to score it, we don't know actually how much this beast of a bill will actually cost.

But the budget experts at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business say that the Democratic proposal has been dramatically understated in terms of its cost and its scope. Indeed, the folks at the Wharton School say the ultimate cost of this

bill is really somewhere on the order of \$4 trillion—more than double the amount that the advocates for this bill have stated.

The Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget concurs. They estimate the true cost of the bill would double to almost \$5 trillion over 10 years because of arbitrary sunsets and expirations and other gamesmanship when it comes to this expensive government proposal. That is a whole lot more than the President's promise of zero dollars in cost.

The President continues to insist that this bill costs nothing, but the American people are not deceived. They understand, when you talk about \$1.75 trillion or \$4 trillion, that somebody, somewhere, is going to have to pay for it; hence, the largest tax increase in American history.

Then there is the so-called temporary nature of some of these government programs. This is all designed to mislead the public and Congress into thinking these bills are cheaper than they actually are. As President Reagan famously said, "Nothing lasts longer than a temporary government program."

Despite the lofty promises that have been made, millionaires and billionaires won't be the only ones footing the bill for this spending spree. In fact, one of the last-minute provisions would actually give the ultrawealthy a tax cut, and that is from our Democratic colleagues. One of the latest additions to the bill allows blue-State millionaires and billionaires to pay less in Federal taxes. A former economic adviser to President Obama and current Harvard professor described this provision as "even worse than [he] had feared."

Under this tax break for millionaires and billionaires, nearly two-thirds of those making more than \$1 million would get a tax cut. So we are not just talking about a few bucks; the wealthiest Americans would save an average of \$16,800 next year alone. The party that talks about the need to tax the rich is actually plotting a massive tax cut for the rich.

While this bill will help the wealthiest Americans pay less in Federal taxes, it will ensure the middle class actually ends up paying more. Dating back to the campaign trail, President Biden has repeatedly said that "if you make under \$400,000 a year, I will never raise your taxes one [cent]." His Treasury Secretary has made the same pledge, and the White House Press Secretary has restated this commitment again and again and again.

Well, I understand why the White House is so concerned about this huge tax increase, but the more we learn about this bill, the clearer it becomes that the middle class will be required to help foot the bill for this spending bonanza. The nonpartisan Joint Committee on Taxation found that significant numbers of families will see their taxes increased under the plan. In 2027, well over half of taxpayers earning between \$75,000 and \$100,000 will be paying